

Aggressive Spirit of States-General.

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the policy of balancing the two parties and their leaders, the Guises and the Bourbons. In this policy she was supported by the chancellor, Michefde L'Hopital, and by the majority of the States-General. " Discard these diabolic words Lutherans, Huguenots, Papists," exhorted L'Hopital in his opening address to the assembled deputies. " Let us not change the name of Christians." Toleration was, however, subordinate to the absolute authority of the crown, for L'Hopital emphasised the divine right of kings, and denounced resistance, even on conscientious grounds, as a crime against the royal majesty. The Estates were, however, not disposed to accept this high doctrine, and pitted against it the old claim to a share in government and legislation. Among other reforms, they insisted on their regular convocation every four years, and refused a subsidy on the plea that they had no power to grant taxes without the express authorisation of their constituents. On reassembling at Pontoise in the following August, after a prorogation for this purpose, the twenty-six deputies of the nobility and the Third Estate proved still more aggressive. They revived the claim of 1484. to a share of the sovereign power on behalf of the Estates, and not only declared the patrimony of the Church national property, but proposed to sell a portion of it for the liquidation of the national debt, and demanded toleration for Protestants and the convocation of a Council for the settlement of the religious question in accordance with Scripture alone. Thus the long interval of misgovernment and religious persecution, under the auspices of absolute monarchy, had, since the last meeting of the Estates, produced a reaction which threatened the usurpations of the crown as well as the supremacy of the Church. The atmosphere was now charged with the revolutionary spirit, and though the Estates were dismissed without the chance of enforcing their revolutionary demands, the revolutionary spirit, which both political and religious grievances had nurtured, had evidently taken possession of a considerable part of the nation. The docility of the French is the fact that strikes the Venetian ambassadors of the first half of the sixteenth century ; their restiveness, their proneness to agitation, is the fact that strikes those of the second half. " It is a strange epoch this/⁷ muses Gkx Correro